



CALIFORNIA STATE THREAT ASSESSMENT CENTER

24-HOUR REPORT

24 JULY 2020

(U) CALIFORNIA

(U) San Francisco – US Indicts Chinese Researchers Accusing Them of Military Ties

(U) The US Justice Department announced yesterday the indictments of four Chinese researchers it said lied about their ties to the People's Liberation Army, with one escaping arrest by taking refuge in the China's San Francisco consulate. Three of the researchers, Song Chen, Wang Xin and Tang Juan were charged in recent weeks in California, where all had been undertaking scientific and medical research at prominent universities. A fourth, Zhao Kaikai, a graduate student studying artificial intelligence at Indiana University, was arrested last week in Indiana.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [AFP](#)

(U) NATIONAL

(U) District of Columbia – Detained ISIS Terrorists Admit Involvement in Kidnapping of Americans

(U) Washington – Two of the British Islamic State in Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) terrorists dubbed the “Beatles,” further incriminated themselves in the mistreatment of Western hostages in Syria, including Americans Kayla Mueller and James Foley, in interviews obtained by media sources. In the interviews, the two men, Alexanda Kotey and El Shafee Elsheikh, for the first time admitted their involvement in the captivity of Kayla, an aid worker who was tortured and sexually abused before her death in 2015. Elsheikh also implicated himself in the abuse of American James Foley. Kotey and Elsheikh are both in US military custody in Iraq amid questions over how and when they will face justice. US and British authorities say the so-called “Beatles” were responsible for 27 killings, including the beheadings of Americans Foley, Steven Sotloff, and Peter Kassig, and British aid workers David Haines and Alan Henning.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [NBC News](#)

(U) District of Columbia – Feds Warn That Hackers are Targeting Critical Infrastructure Sites

(U) Washington – Federal authorities yesterday warned that foreign hackers are attempting to target US critical infrastructure. The National Security Agency and the Department of Homeland Security’s Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency specifically warned that internet-connected operational technology assets – which are used throughout US defense systems – were often the targets of malicious cyber actors attempting to hit critical infrastructure, such as systems providing water, gas and electricity. As a result, the agencies recommended that critical infrastructure operators and owners take “immediate action” to secure their systems.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [The Hill](#)

(U) New York – US Deports Man After Push for Indefinite Detention Fails

(U) Rochester – A man convicted of terrorism-related crimes, who served his sentence and was then detained by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement, has been deported after a legal battle to hold him indefinitely stalled. Federal immigration authorities held Adham Amin Hassoun until Tuesday at a detention facility in Batavia, New York, since his release from prison in 2018. Previously, they had argued in court that they had the authority to detain him indefinitely under the Patriot Act until they

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could find a country willing to accept him. Hassoun, 58, is a Palestinian born in Lebanon. In 2007, he was convicted along with Jose Padilla, who is still imprisoned, of conspiracy to murder, kidnap and maim people in a foreign country. Padilla, a US citizen, was initially detained as an enemy combatant in 2002 on suspicions he planned to set off a radioactive “dirty bomb,” but those allegations were ultimately dropped in favor of charges that he, Hassoun, and another conspirator sent money, recruits and supplies to Islamic extremist groups.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [Associated Press](#)

(U) Utah – FBI Arrests Man for Torching Police Vehicle During Riot

(U) Salt Lake City – The FBI has arrested Christopher Isidro Rojas, one of the two men accused of torching a Salt Lake City Police vehicle during a riot on 30 May. An anti-police protest turned violent on 30 May when several people surrounded a Salt Lake City Police Department cruiser. In the days since five people were arrested for overturning the patrol car and FBI agents sought two other men for lighting a piece of cloth and putting it inside. Agents poured over videos to capture still photos of the masked suspects and offered a reward for information on them.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [ABC 4](#)

(U) INTERNATIONAL

(U) China – US Ordered to Close Consulate in Retaliation

(U) Chengdu – China ordered the US to close its consulate in the southwestern city of Chengdu, following through on retaliation threats after the Trump administration’s unprecedented decision to shut down the Chinese mission in Houston. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs said Friday that the consulate’s closure was a “legitimate and necessary response to the unjustified act by the US.” The widely anticipated retaliation came hours ahead of the US’s deadline for Chinese diplomats to vacate the Houston facility, which the State Department said had served as a hub for spying and influence operations.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [Bloomberg](#)

(U) Nigeria – ISIS Claims it Killed Five Aid Workers in Nigeria

(U) Abuja – Militants from an ISIS affiliate claimed responsibility yesterday for killing five aid workers who were kidnapped last month in northeastern Nigeria. The Islamic State West Africa Province, which broke away from Boko Haram several years ago, warned in June that it would target Nigerians working for international aid agencies along with those who helped the military. The group issued its claim online in its digital weekly newspaper, al-Naba. The aid workers were killed on Sunday, and a video of their deaths was later released on social media.

SOURCE: 23 July 2020, [Associated Press](#)

(U) PREPARED BY THE CALIFORNIA STATE THREAT ASSESSMENT CENTER.

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